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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5987

RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 1069

INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8127

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2255

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4191

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 2317

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 4745

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 5915

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 3091

RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 6545

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

RHMFISS/DISA WASHINGTON DC

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC

RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 003491

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

MANILA FOR D/KAYE LEE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2017

TAGS: PGOV JA

SUBJECT: ABE ANNOUNCES EXTRAORDINARY DIET SESSION,
RESHUFFLE PLANS

REF: TOKYO 3375

Classified By: AMBASSADOR J. THOMAS SCHIEFFER, REASONS 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Prime Minister Abe told the press that his near term agenda includes a short session of the Diet, a reshuffle of senior party positions, and a cabinet change. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Prime Minister Abe appeared before the press on July 30, minutes after receiving an endorsement of his continued party leadership by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Executive Board and announced that the Diet would meet from August 7-10 in an extraordinary session devoted entirely to housekeeping duties. In the Upper House new members chosen in the July 29 elections will be sworn in, and committee assignments made. Other than a few minor committees, however, the task of naming Upper House committee chairmen will be deferred until the fall Diet session. This results from the unique situation created by the election in which the governing LDP-Komeito coalition, which maintains its commanding majority in the Lower House, no longer controls the Upper House. The appointment of committee chairmen will require more extensive negotiations between the coalition and the now-majority Upper House opposition than the short extraordinary session allows. The Diet's Lower House will also convene during August 7-10, but will have virtually no business to consider other than possibly disaster relief coordination in the wake of the Niigata earthquake.

¶3. (SBU) In addition, the Upper House President and Vice President will be selected. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and LDP appear to have agreed to follow the custom in which the new Upper House president comes from the leading party in the house and the Vice President from the second strongest. So far two DPJ names have emerged for the Upper House presidency: Satsuki Eda and Azuma Koshiishi. Eda (66)

hails from Okayama Prefecture and has been a Diet member for 30 years. First elected to the Upper House in 1977, he went on to serve four terms in the Lower House. He then left the Diet to run for governor of Okayama before returning for two more terms in the Upper House. Koshiishi (71) has served two terms in each house representing Yamanashi Prefecture. His political career began in 1990 when he ran for election in the Lower House. He lost in the 1996 poll but ran for an Upper House seat in 1998 as an independent; he joined the DPJ after that election. LDP vice presidential candidates include Hiroyumi Nakasone, oldest son of former Prime Minister Nakasone, and Akiko Santo, a former actress.

¶4. (SBU) Abe also told the press on July 30 that he intended to reshuffle the party leadership. Complicating the process of selecting a new LDP leadership and cabinet, however, is the absence of several members of the current cabinet. Foreign Minister Aso, whose name has been floated to replace the resigning Hidenao Nakagawa as LDP Secretary General, departed on July 31 for the ASEAN Regional Forum in the Philippines; he also is planning to travel to the Middle East and South America during August 12-25. Agriculture Minister Akagi departed Tokyo Monday for meetings in Washington, DC, and Defense Minister Koike has plans to travel to Washington next week. In addition, Prime Minister Abe plans to travel to India, Indonesia and Malaysia during August 19-25. Speculation has already begun over whether Abe again fills the cabinet with friends. To date most of the LDP faction heads have come out in support of Abe continuing in office, perhaps in hopes of securing an important party or cabinet position for their faction members.

TOKYO 00003491 002 OF 002

¶5. (SBU) As for the LDP districts, some continue to withhold support for the Abe administration in anger over their drubbing in the polls. Of the 47 prefectures, 25 have voiced support for the Abe administration but 20 have yet to commit.

The remaining two have called for Abe's resignation. Even those who expressed support of Abe criticized his decision to remain Prime Minister. The head of the Yamanashi chapter, for example, said he thought Abe should resign but because Abe chose not to do so the chapter would support him. The influential business lobby Keidanren also has renewed its support for the Abe administration. Keidanren Chairman Mitarai called for continuing the reforms the Abe government has begun to implement, noting that positive effects from these reforms are already in evidence.

¶6. (C) Comment: Abe is taking hits from all sides but has so far steadfastly refused to step down. In meetings today at LDP headquarters, staff members revealed that they privately had nicknamed the Prime Minister "Abe Fu-Shinzo," a play on the first half of his name which sounds like the Japanese for "trust" and the prefix "fu" which means "no." Former Defense Minister Ishiba pointed out the difficulty in explaining to voters Abe's refusal to step down when Abe had called the Upper House election a choice between the DPJ's Ozawa and himself. State Minister for Regulatory Reform Watanabe described the election as one of "do or die" for the cabinet, and they had essentially "died." DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa criticized Abe's decision to remain Prime Minister as demonstrating a "lack of common sense." Meanwhile, a Fuji-TV on-line poll showed that 62.5 percent of respondents want Abe to resign but were unclear who should replace him. LDP headquarters officials told Embassy officers on July 31 that the party lacks a clear successor and so has opted to keep Abe for the time being. It remains unclear, however, how long this will remain tenable in the face of public and media pressure as well as regional disgruntlement.

SCHIEFFER